



2nd Annual Innovators Forum
SOLAR THERMAL '11
December 1, 2011

How does the solar heating and cooling industry survive and flourish with low natural gas prices?

Background: The Milwaukee Metro Solar Hot Water Business Council hosted a large group discussion at the SOLAR THERMAL '11 conference, held December 1-2, 2011 in Milwaukee, WI. The forum centered around one BIG question: *"How does solar thermal survive and flourish with low natural gas prices?"* Here are the action ideas from participants:

Technical Improvements

- Increase investment in research and development to advance product offerings and reduce price.
- Speed up and improve certification processes like SRCC.
- Make smart metering technology common practice. Utilize monitoring to ensure quality installs.
- Increase modularity of solar hot water systems. Different sizes, different applications.
- Develop alternative materials to build collectors: more production out of the same size.
- Provide operation and maintenance training for every installation.
- Share data collection with industry.
- Create solar hot water monitoring app for smart phones.

Policies and Incentives

- Create a level field for subsidies. The renewable energy industry can compete if policy makers would even out subsidies for fossil fuels.
- Allow use of financing models such as PACE, leasing, and third party PPAs.
- Maintain or create performance based incentives.
- Ensure an incentive structure that is consistent and predictable.
- Standardize permitting and code requirements.
- Educate policy makers and investment professionals about solar thermal.
- Help decision makers understanding solar heating and cooling is a viable solution.

Marketing and Mainstream Use

- Create clear, convincing sales argument for added value of solar thermal.
- Stop underselling solar thermal. The systems are cool and marketable. Make it make sense.
- Target marketing to specific businesses and industries with perfect solar thermal applications.
- Help customers understand the roof can be a revenue source.
- Reach out to architects and building designers to get solar thermal included from beginning.
- Install quality systems!
- Focus marketing on commercial and industrial systems with high hot water use.
- Change focus from "payback" to "return on investment" or "future cost savings"
- Utilize focused marketing campaigns to specific audiences: "Solar thermal is patriotic"